

Columbia Daily Spectator, March 9, 1961, pp. 1, 3,
Report on "Dudley's Folly"

Recent Resignations Reveal Decentralization Problems

By Ira S. Youdovin
(*Eighth in a Series*)

Shortly after the Columbia College Admissions Office became independent last June, two high-ranking admissions officers resigned, bringing to light a year-long controversy over decentralization.

Former Director of Undergraduate Admissions David A. Dudley's policies were unpopular with College alumni, and it is no secret that many have expressed dissatisfaction with the geographical and religious content of the Class of 1964.

As Director of University Admissions and Financial Aid, Joe Jefferson had been an advocate of strong central control. Mr. Dudley had worked in close association with him in processing and evaluating College and Un-

dergraduate Engineering applications.

Neither Mr. Dudley nor Mr. Jefferson was fired, although the former was slated to be part of a change which would have separated him from the College admissions procedure.

Some sources close to the situation, however, maintain that Mr. Dudley had been forced out by pressure. Many influential alumni, including members of the powerful Columbia College Council, were irate over the Director's disregard for non-academic factors in considering applicants and his indifference to organized alumni recruiting operations.

With central processing, they were not aware of how unbal-

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Two Resignations Indicate Problems Of Decentralization

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anced the Class of 1964 would be until it was too late to mount a recruiting drive. Further angered by multiple rejections of highly-prized athletes, alumni allegedly took steps to gain a voice in the admissions procedure. This was inconsistent with Mr. Jefferson's principles, the sources conclude.

There is little doubt that Henry S. Coleman was the alumni's choice for director. He is an active alumnus and a firm believer in good athletic teams and a cosmopolitan student body.

Mr. Coleman claims that the decentralized office was his personal suggestion. With its own budget and staff, the college office has been able to conduct a successful nation-wide recruiting

campaign.

There have been allegations, however, that alumni hit upon the idea for a decentralized office to facilitate their plans. Pressure can be more readily exercised on a Dean than on a central agency, especially since the Dean is in charge of raising funds for his school's development projects.

Friends of Mr. Jefferson say that he quit when he felt that alumni had gained control of the College Admissions Office. Enemies say that he did a childish thing in an attempt to support his friend, David Dudley.

There is probably some truth in all of these contentions. Six months later, they are no longer relevant. The resignation of Mr. Jefferson—whatever the causes—was the final step in the decentralization of the College admissions office.

The “Dudley’s Folly” episode is well known in college admissions circles and comes up in the context of discussions of affirmative action, diversity, etc. For example:

Dudley’s Folly

By FRED SCHWARZ, January 8, 2014, *National Review*

Jay, your* mention of the professor who said that if Harvard had fair admissions it would be 80 percent Asian reminded me of a related episode from half a century ago.

*<https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/interesting-silence-jay-nordlinger/>

When I was an undergraduate at Columbia in the early 1980s, people still talked about the famous class of ’64. What made them famous was that they were the only class chosen by admissions director **David A. Dudley**, who reasoned that Columbia was looking for smart people and the best indicators of smartness were grades and test scores. (His previous job was at MIT.) So he chose the class based almost entirely on those two criteria, and the results were what you’d expect: A class that was very Jewish and very New York, even by Columbia standards (I’ve heard estimates of 80 percent for each category). Here** Philip Lopate, a member of the Class of 1964, recalls what Columbia was like for Jews in those days.

**<https://books.google.com/books?id=ydmtk2HGrcAC&pg=PA303#v=onepage&q&f=false>

You’ll notice that I said 1964 was the only class Dudley chose. That’s because as soon as people noticed what had happened, there was a great uproar, and he had to resign. The class immediately became known as **Dudley’s Folly**. As the student newspaper summed up candidly in the spring of 1961, “Former Director of Undergraduate Admissions David A. Dudley’s policies were unpopular with College alumni, and it is no secret that many have expressed dissatisfaction with the geographical and religious content of the Class of 1964.” Critics complained of Dudley’s “disregard for non-academic factors in considering applicants.”

Of course, back then it was only a few decades since Columbia (like other schools) had first had to grapple with its “Jewish problem.” Starting in 1919, writes Benjamin Ginsberg,

Columbia, led by President Nicholas Murray Butler, introduced new admissions procedures designed to reduce the number of Jews in its classes. The new application process required a psychological test designed to measure character and included a form that asked for religious affiliation and father’s name and birthplace. The percentage of Jews at Columbia was quickly cut in half. Other universities soon followed suit.***

***<https://books.google.com/books?id=BMVISblxhgC&pg=PA85&lpg=PA85#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Which is one reason why so many Jewish intellectuals attended City College in the 1920s and 1930s.

Source: <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/dudleys-folly-fred-schwarz/>